



MENTAL HEALTH UPDATE

November 18, 2009

The Department of Mental Health wishes you and your family a safe and joyous Thanksgiving holiday.

ADULT MENTAL HEALTH & FUTURES

Statewide Program Standing Committee for Adult Mental Health Welcomes Two New Members and Reappointment of Three Current Members

The Adult Statewide Program Standing Committee is pleased to welcome Lesa Cathcart and Beebe Potter as new members of the Standing Committee. Lesa is Director of Nursing on the inpatient psychiatric unit at Rutland Regional Medical Center. She is a Registered Nurse with certification in psychiatric mental-health nursing, bringing the perspectives of an experienced inpatient provider to the work of the Standing Committee. Beebe is Community Rehabilitation and Treatment Clinical Program Manager at Northwest Counseling and Support Services in St. Albans. She has been in community mental health for more than fifteen years and will bring the perspectives of a community provider to the deliberations of the Standing Committee.

In addition, Lise Ewald, Kitty Gallagher, and Marty Roberts, already members of the Standing Committee, were reappointed to three-year terms. Lise is a family member of an adult with major mental illness, while Kitty and Marty are both peers.

Statewide Program Standing Committee for Adult Mental Health Meets

The Adult Program Standing Committee held its regular monthly meeting on Monday, November 9, 2009. Commissioner Michael Hartman told Standing Committee members that the in-house census of the Vermont State Hospital (VSH) is back down in the forties for the first time since early last summer. He also updated the Standing Committee on the latest budgetary developments, advising them that updated state projections are expected in mid-November. Fiscal Years 2011 and 2012 will also probably see austerity budgets, he said. Dr. Meredith Larson, of the Department of Corrections (DOC), filled Standing Committee members in on mental-health services provided in correctional facilities, services available, numbers of clients served, and the like. DOC has a current initiative to identify and focus on inmates with severe functional impairments that inhibit their ability to adjust to incarceration. Frank Reed, Department of Mental Health (DMH) Operations Director, and Terry Rowe, Chief Executive Officer of VSH, also updated the Standing Committee on other recent developments in DMH and VSH.

Vermont's Mental Health Block Grant Planning Council Meets

The state's Planning Council for the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant met on the morning of November 9, 2009, in Waterbury to review DMH's report on Fiscal Year 2009 developments, goals, and objectives. The report goes to the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) in Rockville, Maryland, and is required as part of the application process for block grant funding. Vermont currently receives \$747,000 annually for services for adults with severe mental illnesses and children and adolescents experiencing a serious emotional disturbance and their families. Approximately 60% of the funding goes into Children's Services, and 40% goes into programs and organizations that serve Community Rehabilitation and Treatment clients. The Planning Council also heard a presentation from John Pandiani, Chief of Research and Statistics, on selected outcome indicators that the department reports to CMHS. John reported on CRT employment in Vermont, suicide rates in Vermont and other states, and collaborative efforts with other state agencies.

Secure Residential Residence (SRR) Architectural Design and Development

Black River Design Architects, a Montpelier group, is working with Architecture Plus to offer in-state knowledge of Vermont's environmental review process, design the exterior portion of the building, and contribute other design strategies to actualize the program of space worked out in a months-long process with the stakeholder group. These architects presented and sought feedback on their concept of how to bring the residential wings, the main and service entrances, and the roof configuration together as a whole, while at the same time, maintaining the distinct character of the residential, activity, porch and other areas.

Frank Pitts and Anthony Garner of Architecture Plus presented options for development of the secure outer perimeter. The conceptualization of a recovery-oriented secure facility prompted a variety of ideas for creating the level of security needed yet doing so in a way that feels more sanctuary-like and connected to nature. This would be more of a solid wall, providing privacy as well as security. Due to the slope of the land toward the west and the mountain views, residents would have an unobstructed view from the inner courtyard looking out over the wall. Closer to the wall the barrier would be at least the 14-foot height to be referenced in the 2010 guidelines of the American Institute of Architects (AIA).

Safety of residents was paramount in the discussion of what type of windows, doors, hinges, faucets, lavatories, grab bars, electrical outlets, lighting, ceilings, walls, floors and other features to cost out for the proposal to construct a new secure recovery residence. Based on the input received from the group, the architects will factor in the appropriate hardware and functional elements to complete the construction cost estimates

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Regional Plans the Youth in Transition (YIT)

So far, 7 of the 12 regions have submitted their YIT plans. Four plans have been approved for implementation:

- Addison (Middlebury),
- Orange/North Windsor (Hartford),
- South Windham (Brattleboro), and

- Washington County (Barre)

The State YIT Operations and Outreach Team has sent feedback to, and scheduled a November 24 meeting with, the So. Windsor (Springfield) regional planners. The Bennington plan and the Franklin/Grand Isle (St. Albans) plan will be reviewed at the regular State YIT Team meeting on Thursday, November 19. The 5 regional plans not yet submitted are expected any time!

All the regional plans must demonstrate how they will provide case management and individualized services teaming and planning for young adults in transition. In addition, other common strategies have emerged from the plans submitted:

- Peer outreach, navigation, and mentoring.
- Young Adult (or Youth and Family/Adult Ally) Advisory Boards.
- System of Care Teams (*e.g.*, collaborations of service providers and other community partners, including sub-committees and staff facilitation, that supplement the LIT activities).
- Flexible Funds for helping young adults meet their basic needs and access services.
- Reliance upon TIP Principles or choice of the TIP Model as an evidence-based practice.
- Approaches to supportive housing.

These strategies respond to the needs expressed by young adults for improved access to relevant services, including from a secure home base.

YIT services and evaluation will begin in some regions as early as January, 2010.

New Appointments to Act 264 Advisory Board

The Governor has appointed two new members to the Act 264 Advisory Board: Karen Woolsey of Bethel and Kristin Holsman-Francoeur of Leicester. Karen Woolsey is the Director of Special Services for the Orange North Supervisory Union; she will serve as the Board's special education provider, replacing Jo-Anne Unruh who has retired after serving multiple terms on the Board and was the most recent Chairperson. Kristin Holsman-Francoeur is the Assistant Principal at Rutland Intermediate School and Rutland Middle School; she will serve as one of the Board's three parent representatives.

The Board is currently looking for a parent to nominate for an opening due to a resignation. To gather a feel for the Board's work, you may review the Board's recent meeting minutes and recommendations at the Department's website [<http://mentalhealth.vermont.gov/committees/cafu/act264advisory>]. If you would like to apply, contact alice.maynard@ahs.state.vt.us or call 652-2035.

At a recent meeting, the Board elected new Co-Chairs: Cinn Smith of Fair Haven and Bob Kline of Bradford. They welcomed Joan Senecal, Commissioner of the Department for Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL) to their November 13 meeting; Commissioner Senecal was joined by Amy Roth, DAIL's representative on the State Interagency Team (SIT). The 90-minute discussion was the first in the Board's series of focused conversations with commissioners, SIT, and Local Interagency Teams (LITs) that will be held between now and July 1. The Board wishes to create a more interactive process in developing its recommendations for the interagency system of care.

VERMONT STATE HOSPITAL

VSH Preparing for H1N1

The Education and Training Department has been busy providing training to VSH staff to help prepare for an outbreak of H1N1 flu. Coordinators Diane Bogdan and Paul O’Kane have been conducting in-services on isolation procedures, educating staff on the H1N1 flu, conducting fit testing for N-95 masks, and conducting vaccination clinics for staff.

Recommendations regarding how to manage the H1N1 flu are constantly changing, so it is critical that staff have access to the most up-to-date information. Paul and Diane check for updates daily, and have created an H1N1 information board on the wall outside of the Nursing Classroom which contains the latest updates. They also field individual questions from staff and research the answers for them.

Regardless of whether or not anyone at VSH comes down with the flu, education, preparation, and prevention efforts will continue.

VERMONT STATE HOSPITAL CENSUS

The Vermont State Hospital Census was 46 as of midnight Wednesday. The average census for the past 45 days was 49.3